

Sun and heat exposure

A parent's guide to signs, symptoms, treatment, and prevention.



Many athletes focus on proper conditioning and training to avoid injuries, but not enough of them consider the importance of preventing skin cancer.

According to the **American Cancer Society**, most of the more than one million cases of non-melanoma skin cancer diagnosed yearly in the United States are sun related. Melanoma, the most serious type, will account for about 7,800 of the 10,600 deaths due to skin cancer each year.

Yet despite documented benefits, many athletes do not use sunscreen during outdoor practices or games. In one study of 139 athletes, 46% blamed lack of availability, and 33% thought they didn't need it because of various misconceptions. Others said they didn't consider the weather hot enough for sunburn. Athletes who play in the daytime are exposed to a tremendous amount of UV light.

The **American Academy of Dermatology** recommends avoiding sun exposure from 11 am to 4 pm, precisely the time many teams are playing or practicing. Sweating makes the risk worse. Perspiration on the skin lowers the minimal erythema dose, the lowest UV exposure needed to turn the skin barely pink.

To lower your risk of skin cancer, follow these guidelines:

- Whenever possible, try to schedule games, practices, or physical activity before 11 am or after 4 pm, when the sun's rays are not as powerful.
- When taking a break, try to sit or stand in the shade. If the field has no shade, bring an umbrella or portable tent.
- Use sunscreen! At least 15 to 30 minutes before going outside, apply a broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.
- Reapply sunscreen to all exposed skin 15 to 30 minutes after sun exposure begins and then every two hours.
- Athletes should choose a waterproof or sweatproof sunscreen.
- For athletic attire, choose materials that are light and cool, such as cotton or lightweight synthetics. Shirts with collars can help protect your neck.

Coaches, especially, should encourage younger players to protect their skin. They can set an example by using sunscreen themselves at games and practices.

Keep cool

- The cooler you stay, the harder you'll play.
- Frequent water breaks and open water policies — have fluids readily available.
- Get in the shade during breaks whenever possible.
- Wear light-colored, breathable materials.
- Use sunscreen.

Hydration is key

- Right amount and type of fluids
- 7-10 ounces before
- 10-12 ounces every 15 minutes
- 20-24 ounces/pound lost in practice

First aid tips

- Change to dry clothes if they get soaked.
- Place ice/cold towels on neck/armpits; if getting overheated, move to a cooler/shaded area.
- Remove wet, soaked socks, shoes, and clothing to allow cooling.
- If an athlete is disoriented, cramping severely, or has stopped sweating, call 911.

Watch for the following signs:

- Confusion/irrational behavior
- Headache
- Sluggish
- Cramping
- Vomiting
- Stopped sweating
- Recently ill



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● **SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Pediatrics Specialty Services Anderson Ambulatory Surgery Center**
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SSM Health Cardinal Glennon SportsCare

SSM Health Cardinal Glennon SportsCare is the premier pediatric sports medicine provider in St. Louis and St. Charles. We provide exclusive, direct access to comprehensive medical care for young athletes.

Specialists your child has access to include adolescent medicine physicians, cardiologists, emergency medicine physicians, neurologists, nutritionists, orthopedists, pediatric psychologists, physical therapists, pulmonologists, radiologists, and rehabilitation specialists. We also keep kids in the game through educational programs and supports for parents, coaches and athletes that focus on injury prevention, proper technique and overall athletic health.

For more information about SSM Health Cardinal Glennon SportsCare or to find a specialist for your athlete, call or text us **24/7 at 314-577-5640**.

Expert care for young athletes by SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital providers, **24 hours a day in the ER at:** SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital, DePaul Hospital, St. Clare Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital-St. Charles, St. Joseph Hospital-Lake St. Louis, Anderson Hospital, and HSHS St. Elizabeth Hospital.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, SSM Health ministries implemented enhanced safety measures, which are evaluated periodically based on COVID-19 transmission numbers. To ensure your protection and that of others, we continue to require face masks upon entry along with ministry-specific screening processes.